

# **CALIFORNIA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM INTERPRETIVE HANDCAR PROGRAM**

## **TEACHER'S AID**

### ***BACKGROUND INFORMATION***

The railroad handcar has its origins in the simplest of track maintenance vehicles--a platform resting on four flanged wheels, and propelled by foot power. Later, poles and hand cranks were used to move these cars down the track. The levered design, in which a hand pump provides the propulsion, began to be developed in the late 1850's and 1860's, and lasted well into the twentieth century. This is basically the design mechanism of the California State Railroad Museum Interpretive Handcar. Today, motorized track vehicles, or "speeders", are used on America's railroads.

Built in 1991, the California State Railroad Museum Interpretive Handcar is designed to provide school children with a safe experience in the operation of this most basic of railroad equipment. It features an enlarged platform with a non-skid surface and a reduced gear ratio for slow speed and ease of pumping. The vehicle weighs 1,000 pounds and can accommodate up to eight children plus a Museum staff person. The handcar project was funded by the California State Railroad Museum Docent Council.

### ***PROGRAM GOALS AND CURRICULUM***

The Interpretive Handcar Program compliments other educational activities taking place at the California State Railroad Museum. Its hands-on approach gives students the opportunity to experience the trials, tribulations and hardships associated with the heavy labor performed by track maintenance workers. Students will also study photographs, tools, equipment and printed information related to track-laying, maintenance of railroads, and the operation of railroad equipment and motorized track vehicles.

The one-hour Interpretive Handcar Program will be held on the railroad tracks between the Sacramento History Museum and the Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station in Old Sacramento. Museum staff members will meet your group at your scheduled time.

The presentation is divided into five parts:

1. History of the railroad handcar, motorcar, and velocipede.
2. Rules and regulations for operation of railroad equipment--Safety first!
3. Hands-on experience of pumping the California State Railroad Museum's Interpretive Handcar over 200 yards along the Museum's Sacramento Southern Railroad track.
4. Roundhouse/turntable demonstration. Experience a 60-ton turntable moving under your feet.
5. The motorized track vehicle. Experience the 1/8 mile ride down the rails, being pulled by a Fairmont Speeder and back again.

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#### *PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS*

**Note: Charge of \$50 per class for this program**

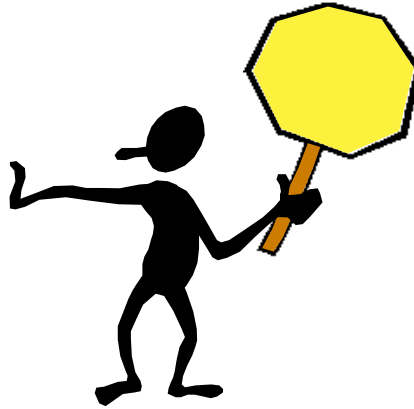
Make checks payable to: **CSRM Foundation**. Payment due day of visit.

- Age Group:** School groups, Grades 4, 5 and 6
- Class Size:** A maximum per reservation of 35 students plus 1 adult chaperon for every 10 students
- Program Schedule:** March 14 thru May 10, 2001, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m.
- To Schedule:** Participation in the Interpretive Handcar Program is by reservation only. All classes meet for one hour. Groups more than 15 minutes late will forfeit their reservations.
- Dress:** The Interpretive Handcar Program is an outdoor activity. Dress appropriately for an outdoor physical activity. Tennis shoes desirable.
- Inclement Weather** For safety reasons, all Interpretive Handcar appointments will be cancelled in
- Cancellations:** case of inclement weather. Interpretive Handcar Program staff members will determine the necessity for cancellation. For questions regarding appointments in wet weather you may call the Ranger at the Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station at (916) 322-3676 between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

**CANCELLATIONS:** If you are unable to keep your reservation, please call ReserveAmerica at 1-866-240-4655 as soon as possible to cancel and allow other school groups to participate in this program.

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## ***SAFETY RULES***

1. Play it safe. Don't horse around!
2. Keep the tracks clear. No walking on the rails.
3. Use the steps to get on and off the Handcar. No jumping.
4. Keep hands on the pump handle at all times during the ride.
5. Keep both feet on handcar deck at all times during the ride.
6. Don't climb on railroad equipment unless instructed to do so by Museum staff.
7. Pump handle slowly.

## ***TEACHERS***

Please go over the **SAFETY RULES** with your students before your scheduled visit.